

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Virginia
COUNTY:	Independent City
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

## 1. NAME

COMMON:

Bruton Parish Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Bruton Parish Church

## 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Northwest corner, Duke of Gloucester Street and The Palace Green

CITY OR TOWN:

Williamsburg

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

001

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY:

Independent City

CODE

830

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	BPC has been
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	famous for its musical presentations	since the 18th century. It still is
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	used for that purpose.	

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Bruton Parish Episcopal Church

STREET AND NUMBER:

Duke of Gloucester Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Williamsburg

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

51

## 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Clerk, Circuit Court

STREET AND NUMBER:

Court Street (2 blocks south of Duke of Gloucester) P.O. Box 385

CITY OR TOWN:

Williamsburg

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

51

## 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Buildings Survey (photographs, 2)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937

☒ Federal☐ State☐ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

Capitol Hill

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

D.C.

CODE

11

STATE:	Virginia
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 7. DESCRIPTION

(RECORD HISTORIC)

LAND (Check One)

CONDITION

☒ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Deteriorated    ☐ Ruins    ☐ Unexposed

(Check One)

(Check One)

☒ Altered☐ Unaltered☐ Moved☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg Virginia is a simple eighteenth century church whose fundamental virtues are those of proportion. It was built 1711-1715, with its tower added in 1769. It reveals a beautiful mixture of gothic and renaissance features. The roofline for instance, is that of a steeply pitched gable (gothic), while one of the most imposing visual features of the building is its use of roundheaded and then altogether round windows (renaissance).

The earlier part of the church was built before English patternbooks began to be published in the 1720's, and its style derives at least in part from the influence of the high style of the Wren-baroque architects of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in England. Most importantly, the plan itself is a medieval one, the cruciform being a symbolic form which has persisted throughout the entire christian era. Aside from the scarcely-comparable Saint Paul's Cathedral, Sir Christopher Wren never designed a cruciform church, although some of his churches appear to be so from the interior. Virginia alone of the American colonies accepted the cruciform plan and Bruton Parish Church was the prototype of that design which spawned such outstanding work as Christ Church in nearby Lancaster County in 1732. It would seem moreover that the only surviving cruciform churches built in the American colonies before Bruton Parish Church are The Swedish Lutheran Churches of Gloria Dei in Wilmington Delaware and Philadelphia Pennsylvania, built 1698-1700.

The exterior of this simple church whose dimensions are 103'9" west to east and 38'10" north-south, is laid in a handsome Flemish bond with an irregular pattern of glazed headers. Some difference in color may be seen between the plum-colored tower added in 1769 and the lighter red of the earlier nave and transepts. The church is of one storey, 23' high with walls 2 and 1/2 ft. thick. The tower is three storeys, rising to a height of 100 feet. The spire of Bruton Church appears to be in the style of James Gibbs and it has been suggested that its movement through two octagons to the spire might have been inspired by the much more polished example given by Saint Michael's at Charleston, South Carolina, completed ten years earlier.

The exterior is punctuated by round-arched and circular windows, while a simple modillion cornice livens the eavesline. The interior of Bruton Church is one of the simplest of all Georgian churches. It's restoration to eighteenth century appearance has established an effective contrast between the flat, white, plastered ceilings, and the richness of the woodwork. The latter is a mixture of original and reconstructed work.

The role of the church as something of a theatre for the display of pomp and ceremony, of rank and position, is suggested in the variety of pews and the placement of galleries in the church. The royal governor

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☒ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century  
☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1711-1715, 1769

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |  |  |

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bruton Parish Church (1711-1715, 1769) was probably designed by Royal Governor Alexander Spotswood in 1711, with its western tower added later in the century. The church represents the first to be built in a cruciform plan in the Virginia Colony. Since that plan became a common form only in that colony, Bruton Parish Church was a prototype. Its classical details demonstrate a mixture of drastically simplified Wren-type forms with a persistent conservative survival of medieval ideas. It is the earliest church in the American colonies to reflect the infusion of English Renaissance style, and marks a sharp contrast to the medieval survival of nearby churches such as the Newport Parish Church, for instance. Its exterior details such as roundheaded and circular windows, as well as its interior, with a flat, suspended, plaster ceiling surmounting a broad, coved cornice, supplant earlier more gothic features like the pointed window and visible roof trusses.

In the years following the turn of the eighteenth century the population of Williamsburg expanded rapidly and was especially swollen during those parts of the year when the Assembly was meeting. The Capitol was moved to Williamsburg from Jamestown in 1699, and one result of the new growth was the strain placed upon the facilities at The Bruton Parish Church. Several wooden structures had stood near the present site at Duke of Gloucester Street and The Palace Green, and so too had stood at least two brick churches. By November 1710, the vestry of the church felt compelled to petition the assembly "for their Generous Contribution towards same", that is an alleviation of the crowded situation at the church. The result was not only the funds that they had requested, but a design for a new building from the hand of the colony's Royal Governor himself, Alexander Spotswood. The plan was for the church was to be one 75' X 28' with two wings on each side, each one 22 feet. The governor proposed that the vestry build only 53 feet of the 75, and that he would take care of remaining part out of his own pocket. Apparently he did so, but in 1712 he decided to shorten each arm from an interior length of 19 feet to one of 14 feet 6 inches.

The church was in use by 1715, although the roof was not shingled until 1717. In December 1749, a certain Emery Hughes agreed with the vestry

# 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Marcus Whiffen, The Public Buildings of Williamsburg (Williamsburg 1958).  
 William H. Pierson, Jr., American Buildings and their Architects: The Colonial Period (New York, 1970).  
 Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York 1952).  
 L. A. Coffin and A.C. Holden, Brick Architecture of the Colonial Period in "Maryland and Virginia" (New York, 1919).  
 Stephen P. Dorsey, Early English Churches in America, 1607-1807 (New York, 1952).  
 James S. Rawlings, Virginia's Colonial Churches, An Architectural Guide (Richmond, 1963).

# 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

18.348980.4126180

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

# 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: <u>James Dillon Architectural Historian</u>	
ORGANIZATION: <u>National Historic Landmarks, Landmark Review Project</u>	DATE: <u>10/4/74</u>
STREET AND NUMBER: <u>1100 L. Street, N.W.</u>	
CITY OR TOWN: <u>Washington</u>	STATE: <u>D.C.</u>
	CODE: <u>11</u>

# 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Designated: May 19, 1970 date

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC BOUNDARY COMMISSION)

Date June 6, 1975 date

Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Boundary Assumed: \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of The National Register: 7/3/75 date

Director, OAHPS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE Virginia	
COUNTY Independent City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

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(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARK)

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries) 7. Description second page

and his family occupied the most prominent pew to the northeast of the crossing, and over his chair was a canopy with a valance. Square pews were reserved for members of The House of Burgesses. The rector and the Surveyor General occupied pews in the choir, while the common people sat in the nave, men to the north, women to the south. Students were allowed in the west gallery along with some indians, while servants were permitted to stand in the north gallery.

In 1749, the vestry contracted with Emery Hughes for the construction of a wall around the Bruton Parish Churchyard. The property owned by the parish at that time consisted of three lots, two contained within the new wall, and the third adjacent to the West. The latter was used as a parking area for carriages and is now occupied by a handsome Greek Revival style brick house. Since the original wall still survives around the churchyard, it would seem most reasonable to set the boundary of this landmark to be co-extensive with that wall. It extends from the junction of Duke of Gloucester Street and Palace Green 323 feet west to a point where it turns to the north for a distance of 194 feet to a point where the wall turns east for 330 feet to a point where it finally turns south for 182 feet returning to the point at the junction of The Palace Green and Duke of Gloucester Street.

STATE  
Virginia

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COUNTY  
Independent City

(NATIONAL U. S. MONUMENT  
LANDMARKS)

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ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

to build the churchyard wall for 290 pounds. In February 1751, the vestry decided to build an addition to the church, and a year later, the House of Burgesses resolved to make the enlargement of the church a "country charge". The addition took the form of a 22 foot extension at the chancel end, making that part of the church east of the crossing precisely equal in size to the nave to the west of it.

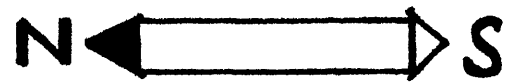
In December 1768, first steps were taken towards erection of a steeple, built by Benjamin Powell one of the prominent tradesmen of the town. Before this time Bruton had nothing more than a bell-cote.

Bruton Parish Church came through the Revolution unharmed and continued to serve as an Anglican place of worship. By the end of the century however it had fallen into disrepair owing to the financial distress of the disestablishment.

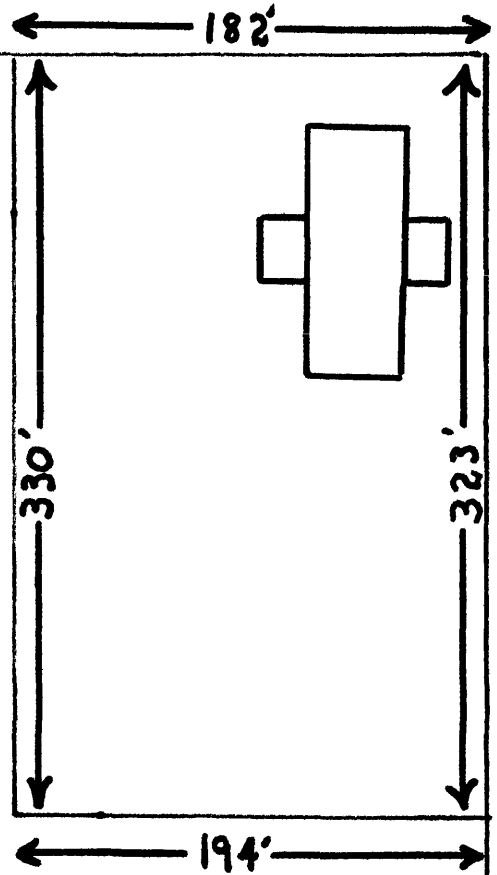
The pews were cut down in 1829, while it was further altered by partitions and stoves in 1838-40. Much of the old woodwork was sold. Some attempt at repairs and alterations was made in 1886 but their extent is unknown.

In 1902 when Rev. William A.R. Goodwin, Rector of St. John's Petersburg was invited to be rector of Bruton Parish, he made it a condition of his acceptance that the vestry allow him to restore Bruton Parish Church. J. Stewart Barney, a New York City architect, was hired, and if nothing else, a certain stylistic consistency was imposed upon Bruton Parish's interiors. In 1938-1942, Colonial Williamsburg, Inc. completed that partial restoration of the church to its present late-eighteenth century appearance. The exterior is largely original, while on the interior, a good deal of the windows and their frames, the West doorway, the railing, turned ballusters, and the framing of the West Gallery, are original. The church is maintained in excellent condition and, while still active as a church, is also open to visitors. Frequent musical recitals open to the public are held at the church.

# BRUTON PARISH CHURCH



THE PALACE GREEN



Duke of Gloucester STREET